

MINUTES

Citizen's District Council Meeting
City of Muskegon CDBG
Conference Room 203
Muskegon, Michigan
Tuesday, February 1, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Amy Varnado at 5:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken by Liz Parker.

Present: Ned Carter, Rasheedah Gillespie-Muhammad, Virgie Jackson,
Stephanie Marion, Thomas Pastoor, Addie Sanders-Randall, Amy
Varnado

Excused: Patricia Montney, Stephen Gawron

Staff Present: Oneata Bailey, Liz Parker

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Pastoor made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 17, 2010 meeting. Ned Carter seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Amy Varnado chaired the meeting tonight as Pat Montney was not able to attend the meeting. Amy stated Pat had sent her an email of items she wanted discussed and Amy would bring them up accordingly.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Five-year Consolidated Plan Discussion**

Amy started the discussion by letting everyone know Pat Montney wanted to make sure that the draft of the Consolidated Plan be available for the public to review at several locations, including the public library and the Clerk's Office prior to the public hearing for 15 – 30 days. A public notice has to be in the Chronicle regarding the Consolidated Plan and it is usually mentioned at the NAM meeting. Also, the CDC gets a copy of the draft to read and review and a CDC meeting is held for discussion of the plan prior to it going before the City Commission and the public hearing. Oneata Bailey stated the draft will be ready by March 1. Tom Pastoor asked exactly what goes into the Consolidated Plan. He knew there were public hearings and was sure she got input from City staff. Oneata stated she has heard from the citizens via the neighborhood surveys and public hearings and held a meeting with the 2010 – 2011 CDBG & HOME recipients. There currently has been no input from City staff. Muskegon Housing Commission and Muskegon Continuum of

Care are two agencies reviewed to make sure we have their input and work together to have a community plan to make Muskegon a better place. Amy Varnado asked if each department has to contribute to the Consolidated Plan and Oneata advised they do not. Oneata read the City's Mission Statement: To improve the quality of life for the citizens of Muskegon through stewardship of resources, excellent service, and leadership for the greater community. The Consolidated Plan is to resemble what the City is about and what the City wants to do to make the City a better place to live and a suitable living environment. Amy asked if the City departments should be asked what they plan to do with the monies they receive and be accountable. Tom Pastoor said the City departments look at the goals and say, for example, they are being met with CDBG funds for this road in a low-mod area, etc. Amy asked if the Consolidated Plan, in some ways, drives the City. Oneata said it drives everyone who want grant funds from us or wish to start up a new project. CNS will prepare the Five-year Consolidated Plan; but rather than taking a subjective or objective approach, they will be using HUD's tool. The tool allows you to answer their questions about community and obstacles, which will give a basic report. The Consolidated Plan will be the basis and foundation that we build on via the yearly Action Plan. It is a bit different this year because the City will be submitting the Five-year Consolidated Plan and the Action Plan at the same time. Oneata wants to make sure we are able to meet every goal that is set. She stated the City Commission dictates what we are to do and what we can do it. The Action Plans will be the meat of what we do. This first year will be a year of change.

Tom asked if after spending all this money each year on good things, if there is a danger of jeopardizing the funds if our goals are community development activities. He said the City doesn't invest in the people, just bricks and mortar. Oneata said the City Commission wants feedback from the CDC on what they want. Tom started by stating there should be Community Development, investment in people by providing opportunities for growth, jobs and programs for teaching/training on such things as entrepreneurialship and education. He said there needs to be development of indigenous leaders; they are in the neighborhoods. Workshops, seminars and board training (boardsmanship) are required. The group agreed. Amy asked about matching funds for Americorp workers for some of the neighborhood associations. Tom said they also need to market the City of Muskegon to get rid of the negative perception people have of the City. Muskegon is a great place to live. Stephanie Marion said they also need to invest in the future of our children. Rasheedah Gillespie-Muhammad said another problem to address is there are third generation parents who are not taking care of their kids. Stephanie Marion said there is also generational poverty. Amy said to sum up she'd like the CDC to let the City Commission the CDC would like to think out of the box a little bit and not just fund and support programs that are physical, but there are concerns regarding children, parent and spiritual health of our community that would address today's needs. Addie Sanders-Randall said we say the children are our future, but the children don't know they are our future. They have no hope or guidance. Amy said they also need an antiviolence code. Oneata said the Consolidated Plan is open to the public and the goals cannot be handled all at once but over the five-year period. She said we will take it one year at a time.

- **2011 CDBG/HOME Grant Process**

Amy Varnado said this is the time of year when the CDBG grant process is ramping up to review the proposals, handle the interviews by the CDC and make recommendations. She mentioned Pat's concern that she was told the CBO's (Community Based Organizations) would not do presentations due to time. She would like to have questions and answers to

the CBO's in writing such as have you seen an increase need for your service in this community; have you tried locating other grants for your program; can your project be done successfully if only partial funding is available and if no funding is available through the CDBG this year, can your project still be done. Pat was just restating what the group came up with after last year's grant process was complete. Amy then asked when the process would ramp up this year for the CDC. Oneata Bailey advised the group the City Commission and City Manager decided there would be no CDBG funding for the CBO's this year as the money is not there. In lieu, the City Commission is asking the CDC what they would like to see done. The only applications will be for HOME funds, Habitat for Humanity and Community enCompass, which will be advertised in the Chronicle on February 5. Tom Pastoor said he didn't understand what happened to the money. Oneata said the City Commission is asking the CDC for their input. The City Commission felt it was an arduous process to go through preparing the large book, etc. The City Commission decided this last week and is now letting you know. Tom said he has been talking with NAM and was looking for a way to considering applying for CDBG funds for community development on learning how to be a board member, how to bring people together. The goal is how to connect with people. He wanted to know how the NAM would go about doing this with no CDBG funds. Oneata suggested going to the City Commission meeting for the public hearing some time in April for the Five-year Consolidated Plan and express what you'd like to see in the Consolidated Plan for addressing young people through the neighborhood associations. Tell them you were not given the opportunity to address them through the grant process. She said the non-funding of CBO's was for this coming year. Perhaps there would be funding in future years. This year there is not going to be any change for what they want. Oneata even suggested cutting the number of CBO's receiving funds, cutting the about of funding to the CBO's or having a competition for half the funds going to one CBO. These were not an option. At this point in time only the City departments of Affirmative Action (Affirmative Action and summer interns), CNS (Emergency Repair and Vinyl Siding programs), DPW (Senior Transit), Engineering (street repair and graffiti removal), Finance (Central Fire Station bond), Inspections (board up and demo of dangerous buildings) and Planning (code enforcement and facades) will be funded. Stephanie Marion, as the new member, asked what organizations would not be receiving CDBG funds. Oneata said American Red Cross (medical appointment transportation) Community enCompass (Sacred Suds program), healthCARE (BP and diabetes screening), Legal Aid (foreclosure prevention and tenant legal assistance), Love INC (handicap ramps), Muskegon Community Health Project (diabetic medications), Muskegon Main Street (downtown development) and West Michigan Veterans (food bank). This has been a tough year for CDBG for families. With the current economy, people are not qualifying because they are just over the income limit. She will suggest the funds that would normally go to the CBO's be used for emergency repairs but for income levels between 50 – 80% AMI. The normal Emergency Repair program would continue with income level limits of 50% AMI. Ned Carter said the groups were told last year that this might be the last year. Rasheedah Gillespie-Muhammad said charity begins at home. The City departments getting CDBG funds are using the funds for where CDBG money should be going. Amy asked if the City manages its funds so that people are really getting enough bang for their buck out of those departments as the CBO's would. Tom felt the money should be leveraged. He felt you get more for the return on the money going to a CBO then to some of the City departments. He said he and Steve Gawron had argued this before. Amy said Steve Gawron needs to be here. He neglects his duty by not attending this meeting. He represents the CDC at the City Commission and he needs to be here. Tom made the suggestion that maybe the group

should resign because the message the City Commission is saying is we are going to do the CDC's job for them this year and all you're doing is sitting around the table blabbing and you're not really going to do anything. We don't accept your input and we don't want to participate with you, we know better and we're going to do it our way. Tom also mentioned about Leisure Services. Oneata said there are applications for groups who want to participate in youth activities, of which Tom said he has already gotten one. Oneata said there were a lot of comments on the neighborhood surveys regarding youth. There are enough comments to say we need to do something with our youth and based on what the CDC said tonight. Any investment in our youth is because we want them to stay here, purchase homes and work here. Tom also stated the City helps the poorest of the poor while there are people looking at houses to buy in the City of Muskegon that need some work and a little investment. If the City had a program like what was available 30 years ago that would help people who wanted to rehab their houses with a low interest loan and help with the improvement of the property, the City would end up with a greater tax base and the houses would no longer sit vacant. He feels the City needs residents with that kind of gumption to help invest in our City. Rasheedah said that kind of program would also help invest in the people. The group agreed. The group was surprised by the news that the City Commission does not want to fund the CBO's this year and that they did not tell the CDC directly, nor involve them in the process. Amy made the motion to prepare a statement for the City Commission with the group's sentiments such as 'why are we here if we do not have a say in matters' we feel disappointed, discouragement, disrespected,' etc. Ned Carter seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Tom said he was saddened that this could not be done face to face, that Oneata has to give the group the news. Tom said if that's the decision of the City Commission then Steve Gawron should have the gumption to come before the CDC and tell them so or inform them of their decision. Virgie Jackson said Steve should not be absent when the group really needs him.

- **CDBG/Streets – funds not used for (2008 – 2009) (2009 – 2010)**

Oneata said 2008 – 2009 was when Street Assessments were removed. For 2009 – 2010, the money was taken back because bills were not received from Engineering. Unfortunately, this was due to the loss of a staff person and the temporary worker did not know of the process for getting reimbursed. Engineering asked to get the money back but it was too late. That money went into the Emergency Repair Program. There are some extra funds from CDBG-R (Stimulus funding) funds (approximately \$30,000 left after paving White Avenue) that could be used. For 2010 – 2011, no money was awarded to Engineering. Amy Varnado wanted to know if Engineering was satisfied with this arrangement. Oneata said he didn't have a choice in the matter. Rasheedah Gillespie-Muhammad asked if CDBG funds could be used for leveraging and wasn't that double dipping. Oneata explained some state and federal grants can't be leveraged. The CDBG funds could be used for leveraging, but only for some programs, not all. It is not double dipping.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Introduction of new member Stephanie Marion**

Stephanie was previously on the Leisure Services Board. She comes to the group as the Principal of Three Oaks Academy.

- **Funds Transfer – Vinyl Siding to Emergency Repair**

Oneata Bailey stated \$50,000 would be transferred from the Vinyl Siding program to the Emergency Repair program. Emergency Repair has already run out of funds and there are still people calling for assistance. While Vinyl Siding is important, emergency repairs are more important.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Next CDC Meeting**

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 1, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room 203. Oneata Bailey said a draft of the Five-year Consolidated Plan will be available. It will be presented to the City Commission on March 8 and will be available at various locations within the City. There will be a 30-day period for public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Amy Varnado adjourned the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Liz Parker
Community and Neighborhood Services
City of Muskegon